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EDITORIAL NOTES

The acceptance by Professor Charles H. Judd, of Yale University, of the position of dean of the School of Education and head of the Department of Education in The University of Chicago, has been announced in the daily press, but its peculiar interest to the management and readers of the *School Review* makes notice in this place appropriate. Professor Judd needs no introduction to teachers and to students of education. As the author of psychological texts and investigations, as a regular attendant at educational gatherings and a sympathetic coöperator in the study of educational problems, he is as well known in the field of education as in that of theoretical psychology. He does not begin his duties at Chicago until next June, and so it is impossible to state at present exactly what part he will find it possible to take in the direct work of editing the *Review*. But as the head of the Department of Education, which will be separated from the Department of Philosophy, he will naturally have a large interest in its policy and conduct. The readers of the *Review*, we are confident, will reap advantage in many ways from his accession to The University of Chicago and to the editorial forces of the *Review*.

Principal John L. Riley, of the Central Street Grammar School, Springfield, Mass., has brought out a little pamphlet which is printed by the Holden Patent Book Cover Company of that city, at the modest price of twenty-five cents, in which he gives specimens of the papers of 1846 which were commented upon so widely when they were first published three years ago and compared with the results of the same tests when given to present-day pupils. The interest excited by the comparison as these tests were tried in various schools throughout the country has induced Mr. Riley to make use of the remaining tests—geography and penmanship—for comparison with present-day work, to analyze more thoroughly the work of the pupils of 1846, and to put the whole into a more permanent form. We think that every school superintendent and principal will wish to have a copy of this pamphlet.

The work in geography receives special analysis, for, as Principal Riley says, there is much criticism, not only among outsiders but among teachers, of the present neglect of "place geography," or knowledge of the location of places. The old work in geography was almost entirely centered upon the location of places, and yet in the examination the pupils of 1846 gave only 40.3 correct answers as compared with 53.4 correct answers given by the

pupils of 1906. If the pupils of that date fell so low it was not because they were not drilled in locating places. The samples of penmanship are compared in a very ingenious manner, which, after all, seems perfectly fair; they certainly show far more regular and legible work for the pupils of 1906 than for those of 1846.

We do not know exactly what the writers of the Cleveland platform of the National Education Association had in mind in their second paragraph.

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This reads: "We recommend the subordination of highly diversified and overburdened courses of study in the grades to a thorough drill in essential subjects; and the sacrifice of quantity to an improvement in the quality of instruction. The complaints of business men that pupils from the schools are inaccurate in results and careless of details is a criticism that should be removed." It reads on the face of it as though the Cleveland meeting would have us go back to the simple subjects with the thorough drill of 1846. The complaints of business-men that pupils are inaccurate may mean that they are inaccurate in arithmetical processes. So far as this is the case we consider it under the next paragraph. But in so far as these complaints refer to a more general habit of mind we are not so sure that they can be removed by any amount of "drill in essential subjects." As was stated in an editorial in the *September Review*, habits are formed by *doing*. The habits of accuracy and attention to detail in the earlier days were largely formed not by schoolwork but by the practical responsibilities of work given to the children at home. In school they learned methods which supplemented home training. But now that there is practically nothing in the home training of children which forms habits of responsible attention to details or performance of important work it is, we believe, far more probable that failure in accuracy, so far as it is a fact, is because there is too much of the formal element in the schools and too little of the active doing of things. We do not believe that any amount of drill in such purely formal work as is apparently contemplated by the declaration is likely to meet the situation.

Further, the students of the subject are by no means so confident in their utterances as this next sentence in the Cleveland declaration would seem to imply: "The principles of sound and accurate training are as fixed as natural laws and should be insistently followed." Anyone who reads the recent literature on formal discipline and special training will see that, far from considering the principles of sound and accurate training to be all settled and fixed, investigators at present are emphasizing the need of reconsideration and experiment. Such an investigation as that presented by Professor Thorndike in the *American Journal of Psychology* for July shows very clearly that specific practice in multiplying one three-place number by another gives very rapid improvement. By working five or six such examples per day until ninety-

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six had been done, the time required showed very rapid decrease. The mean improvement for a considerable number of cases was such that for the last five examples only about two-fifths of the time was required which was employed for the first five. But this showed that here was a specific capacity in the case of mature and competent persons which could be very greatly improved by comparatively little practice. Whether these same individuals would have been improved in their ability to divide, or in their ability to perform any other formal operation is not shown by this experiment, but Professor Thorndike's experiments so far lead him to question any such transfer. So far as this particular investigation goes, it would show undoubtedly that if we knew exactly the specific work which the pupil was to be asked to do in an office or store and should give him daily practice in that for a period just before he took his position he could improve greatly. But when we consider the multiplicity of demands that are to be made upon any boy who is to engage in modern business we ask: "Do the businessmen know what they want?" They would like their boys at the outset, we may say, to be accurate in the specific work given. But is it certain that the specific discipline in this work will make the boy valuable for the work of six months later? If we ask what sort of training on the whole gives general ability, and what is the relation of specific training to this ability we find most suggestive and instructive material in the three addresses by Professors Angell, Pillsbury, and Judd, which were printed in the *Educational Review* for last June, dealing with different phases of the problem. It stands out clearly that we need far more investigation and study before we can dogmatize. It is also clearly indicated that the results of drill and discipline cannot be assumed to be universally applicable, so that the boy who has been drilled in an isolated way upon a given routine can be presumed to do everything accurately. Rather it is pointed out that to fit one in any sense for flexibility of mind, for adaptation to varied situations, there must be breadth of training; and if a specific subject is to have general value that study must be itself pursued in a broad way which shall show its relations to other departments.

The Springfield tests have a decided bearing upon this question, and a letter from President Eliot to Principal Riley, printed in the *Springfield Republican*, brings this out forcibly:

PRESIDENT ELIOT'S
COMMENT ON THE
SPRINGFIELD TESTS

Your pamphlet entitled "The Springfield Tests, 1846-1906" is one of the most satisfactory educational demonstrations I have ever read. Its facts are firm and its conclusions convincing. It is much to be wished that it may produce some other similar comparisons of the results of the schools of former generations with those of the present schools. The recent criticism of American schools, on the ground that they attempt too many things and do nothing well, has seemed to me unreasonable and wholly unprofitable, except as it may stimulate school authorities to improve their actual methods, and the public to spend more money on the schools.

The criticisms to the effect that the schools have introduced "fads" and superfluities, like music, drawing, manual training and household economy, to the neglect of reading, writing and arithmetic, have seemed to me unwise and misleading; and so have the derisive attacks on the efforts of teachers and parents to make school studies pleasant and interesting for the children. To make work interesting is the only way to get good work from either children or adults. Your demonstration of the better results from making geography interesting will help to answer this sort of criticism. I hope the pamphlet will have a large circulation, for its demonstrations are needed all over our country.